

# **Confessions of a Booze-Fighter**

## **I Took the Keeley Cure**

**by**

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## I TOOK THE KEELEY CURE

I was just a little boy when Carrie Nation came to Petersburg, but I got a good look\*at her through a crack in the kitchen door. It was a hot day, and Carrie was a very ugly woman. She kept waving her arms, and yelling at the top of her voice. Nothing like that had ever happened in our house before. We were all shocked and embarrassed. My brother and I thought that Carrie must be drunk, but we found out later that she was just excited about something.

Carrie contended that selling whiskey was sinful, and she tried to put down sin by smashing mirrors with a hatchet. Kansas had been theoretically dry since 1883, but there were 27 saloons on Main Street. Father was the City Attorney in those days, and Carrie wanted him to put the saloon-keepers in jail. But father did not believe in bothering saloon-keepers, so long as they kicked in regularly. He said that we needed the money to build school houses and comfort stations.

After Carrie left father wiped his forehead, and poured himself a big drink from the decanter on the sideboard.

"Good God Almighty!" he groaned. "First grasshoppers, then Populists, and now it's women with hatchets! What the hell is this country comin' to, anyhow?"

Mother explained later on that there are men and women in the world who don't like whiskey; they think it's bad for their morals and internal organs. Some of these people, she added, even try to force abstinence upon their neighbors, and would stop all drinking if they had the power. This seemed very strange to me, as I had never heard of it before. I knew, of course, that children mustn't touch liquor, because it might stunt their growth. But I had supposed that all grownups drank whiskey, unless they were very, very poor—like the people in *Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch*.

My brother was several years younger than I, but much more sophisticated.

"It's just a notion," he said wisely. "Like the Jews—they don't eat bacon. Also Catholics, who never have meat on Friday. And then there's the Vegetarians—people that live on spinach, you know."

"Is that the way Carrie Nation is, Papa?" I asked.

"Something like that," he answered wearily, and poured himself another jigger of Scotch.

Father drank enough whiskey to float a battleship, but insisted all his life that he was a moderate drinker. "I can take it or let it alone," he chuckled, "but I much prefer to take it." Mother persuaded him to try the Keeley Cure once, but it didn't do any good, and he died quite cheerfully of cirrhosis of the liver.

We children took a little claret-and-water at the table sometimes, but alcohol never meant anything to me until I grew up and went to college. There we talked Socialism, sang German songs, and drank beer almost every night. I thought that beer was a mighty fine thing in those days, and I still think it is good for 98 college boys out of a hundred. The best men in the university drank with us, Phi Beta Kappas as well as T.N.E.'s: The Dean predicted that we would all come to a bad end, but he was an

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ignorant man, and prejudiced. The boys who attended those beer-busts have been much more successful, since graduation, than the sissies who guzzled tea in the Y.M.C.A. building.

Before Prohibition I seldom drank anything stronger than beer, but when the country went dry everybody switched over to whiskey, and I strung along with the crowd. We did most of our drinking on Sundays and holidays, and it didn't seem to hurt us any. A weekly binge wastes less of a young man's time than politics or skeet, and is much less expensive than bridge or woman-chasing. Most of the boys I drank with are in their middle 50's now. Nearly all of them still drink whiskey, and one or two even get drunk occasionally, but liquor hasn't done them any serious damage.

It didn't seem to hurt me any, either, until I met a lady who was hell-bent for temperance and decorum and the better-things-of-life generally.

"These weekend parties," said she, "are all right for Elks and firemen and people like that, but a man in your position should have more of dignity and restraint."

The lady's suggestion was very cleverly worded, and it fitted right in with my natural inclinations. It is certainly more sensible, I reasoned, to drink a little whiskey every day than to drink a lot of whiskey every weekend. So I didn't get soured with the boys any more, on Saturday nights. From that day forward I just kept pleasantly jingled all the time.

This drinking-like-a-gentleman business worked fairly well for seven or eight years. I attended to my job, made a little money, and had a pretty good time. In the quaint idiom of that day, everything was jake, not to say hotsy-totsy. I just took a drink whenever I wanted one, and thought no more about it. I carried my liquor very well. It never occurred to me that I couldn't stop drinking, should I ever care to do so. My tolerance increased with the years, of course, until I was killing a quart every 24 hours. I felt vaguely that perhaps this was a little too much, but it didn't seem to do me any harm beyond an occasional hangover.

Some hangovers are much worse than others, however. The first really bad one hit me in Kansas City, where I couldn't get out of bed, and had to be tailed up like a sick steer. The hotel doctor didn't know just what was the matter with me, but he suspected that ethyl hydrate had something to do with it. He told me not to drink any more whiskey. That was his advice, he said, and I could take it or leave it. I left it, of course, and sent for another bottle of Haig & Haig.

The hair of the dog put me on my feet, that time in Kansas City, but from then on the bad mornings came thicker, faster and tougher. The pain in the guts was bad enough, but it was the nausea and vomiting that really bothered me. Some mornings I had to hold my nose and take four or five drinks before I could get one to stick. When a man can't keep good whiskey on his stomach there is something seriously wrong with him. After a few months of this, I decided that it might do me good to ride on the wagon for a while.

My first attempt to quit drinking was not a conspicuous success. I locked myself in a hotel room, and did not touch a drop of liquor for four days and nights. I didn't eat anything, either, for good and sufficient reasons. On the morning of the fifth day I gave up the attempt and staggered down to the bar. It was there, after more than 20 years of steady drinking, that I became really intoxicated for the first time in my life.

I stayed drunk for nearly two weeks, and it certainly was a fine party while it lasted. I found myself associating on friendly terms with bankers, prostitutes, congressmen, pimps, chiropractors and other quaint characters. One evening a pretty lady put some chloral into the Scotch, and made off with my watch and other valuables. Finally a gentleman hit me on the head with a bottle, and I found myself lying in the gutter. As they lifted me into the ambulance I heard somebody mention morphine.

and felt the prick of a needle in my arm. Well, I reflected, dope doubtless has its uses, and now maybe I'll get a little sleep. But the stuff wasn't morphine. It was apomorphine, which is something else again. A few seconds later I was vomiting all over the world. "We always use apo on drunks nowadays," an interne told me later on, "it's much less trouble than the stomach-pump." Less trouble for the doctor, maybe, but it sure is hell on the patient.

While I was convalescing in St. Luke's I devoted some serious thought to this liquor business, and talked with Dr. Darby Hicks, who had studied the problem from several different angles.

"People who drink liquor," said he, "fall naturally into two classes. An ordinary normal drinker uses whiskey to help him have a good time. He may drink too much, and get drunk at intervals all his life, but he has no real psychological dependence on alcohol, and drinking doesn't do him any serious harm . . . A real booze-fighter, on the other hand, is a neurotic, with a congenital crook in his elbow. He doesn't drink for pleasure at all, but in order to get out of the world, to escape from a reality which does not please him. He uses whiskey for its sedative and hypnotic action, just as a dope-fiend uses morphine. And you and I," the doctor added ruefully, "are genuine, dyed-in-the-wool booze-fighters."

This view of the matter was new to me, and not particularly pleasing, but I didn't say anything.

"I have never yet advised a normal, moderate drinker to stop drinking," Dr. Hicks went on. "I believe that whiskey in moderation does the average man more good than harm. But you and I are not average men. Alcohol is good stuff for some people, but it's bad medicine for us. I realized this two years ago, and I haven't touched a drop since. You'll have to quit sometime, too. And I advise you not to put it off much longer."

I couldn't quite follow Hicks in his contention that booze-fighters are all neurotics, but the idea frightened me a little, and I drank nothing but beer for about six weeks. Then I took an experimental snifter in New Orleans with a Methodist minister, who insisted upon singing lewd folksongs for some ladies in the St. Charles Hotel. This led to other irrational and turbulent conduct, and this time the Reverend Malarkey and I sobered up in the local hoozegow instead of a hospital.

Well, we got out of that mess all right, but there was more trouble in other hotels, other hospitals, and other jails. Suddenly I found myself without funds, and this humiliating situation sobered me a bit. When a writer is broke there is nothing for it but to get a job in Hollywood, and that's what I did. The scenario department of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer would drive almost anybody to drink, but I stuck it out for several months. Then a sober fellow named Rapf canned me, and I fell off the wagon with a resounding crash. I have no idea what happened that night, but the next morning I woke up on the eastbound Chief. I had a very bad headache, and a ticket to Hot Springs, Arkansas.

A week or so later, in a disreputable Hot Springs hotel, I became so ill that somebody called a physician.

"The trouble with you," said Dr. George Spelvin, "is that you drink too damn' much whiskey."

His harsh voice set my teeth on edge, but I just turned over in bed and groaned a little. There wasn't anything I could do but lie there and take it.

"You've been drinkin' too much for a long time," the old man went on. "An' now you've quit work, an' give your whole time to it. Five years from now you'll be just another drunken bum, moochin' drinks in the bars on Center Street. If you live five years, which ain't likely."

The chair creaked loudly as old Spelvin got to his feet, and when I

opened my eyes he was putting the beorometer back into his little black bag.

"You really mean that, Doctor?" I asked.

"I really mean you'll probably be dead in a year, if you don't quit this damn' drinkin'," he answered. And with that the doctor shuffled out, and slammed the door unfeeling behind him.

The next morning I was feeling rather better, so I got up and poured myself a big shot of straight whiskey. My stomach was still a little jumpy, however, and I had to take three drinks before I finally got one to stay with me. Everything was all right after that. By 10 o'clock I felt able to eat a little breakfast, after which I strolled down the street to Spelvin's office.

The old doctor grinned at me, and pulled a bottle of Scotch out of his filing-cabinet. I shook my head impatiently.

"No, thank you," I said shortly.

"Well, here's mud in your eye, anyhow," said he, and tossed off his drink without a chaser. "Glad to hear you've quit drinkin'."

"I haven't quit drinking," I answered. "You know damned well I can't quit. And now you say I'll die in a year, unless I get on the wagon! What the hell am I going to do?"

"I'd advise you to take the Keeley Cure, and not waste any time about it."

I thought of my father, who had tried the Keeley treatment years ago. It hadn't done him any good. But there was no use in discussing this with Dr. Spelvin.

"You think the Keeley people could fix me up?" I asked.

"There's nothin' sure in this world, son," he answered. "But they certainly do cure some fellows. It's your best bet, anyhow. You don't stand to lose much."

"You're right, Doctor. I certainly haven't much left to lose. Where is this Keeley place?"

"Oh, they've got 'em all over the country. There's one right here in town, out on Park Street. But the headquarters of the whole business is at Dwight, Illinois. I'd go up there if I were you."

Ten minutes later I was on my way.

It is only about 600 miles from Hot Springs to Dwight, but I was four days on the road. Some of my friends came along with me, just for the hell of it, and we threw quite a party in Springfield, Missouri. The trip through Illinois is still a little vague to me, although I remember crossing the Mississippi at Quincy, and having some small difficulty with the police in Peoria.

Dwight is just another little country town, with a population of less than 3,000. The Chicago & Alton railroad cuts through Main Street diagonally, which gives a drunken, cockeyed appearance to the whole place. The Keeley Institute occupies three buildings in a sort of park, at one end of the village. There is a little artificial lake, with white swans splashing under a windmill, and an old brass cannon on the front lawn. The Institute really looks more like a fresh-water college than a sanitarium.

I parked the car on the Keeley campus and staggered into the building, where I shook hands with a sour-faced man who seemed to be in charge. He asked me what I wanted, and I replied that I had come to take the cure, of course.

The sour-faced man called in one of the house physicians, who gave me a hasty physical examination. The purpose of this, I learned later on, is the elimination of patients who are in immediate danger of their lives. Such applicants are rejected and hurried out of the building at once. "We can't have people dyin' all over the place, you know," remarked an attendant. "It would be bad publicity for the Institute."

Having passed the preliminary examination, I was led into the busi-

ness office, where the registrar put the sleeve on me for \$160. He said that the treatment required four weeks, and that this fee for medical attention must be paid in advance. Later on he added charges for meals, lodging and attendants which brought the total up to \$340. I could have reduced this materially by staying in less pretentious quarters, but I was in no mood for petty economies. The manager then had me sign a contract in which I promised to obey the rules of the Institute, on pain of instant expulsion, with no refunding of my tuition-money.

Financial matters arranged, one of the doctors handed me a large glass of whiskey followed by two black pills, which I was required to swallow immediately.

Next I was placed in charge of a burly attendant, known as a jag-boss. It was this man's duty to stay with me every minute of the day and night until I became properly oriented. The process of orientation, I was told, usually requires three or four days.

I quizzed the jag-boss about the meaning of the term orient, but he shook his head doubtfully. "I don't rightly know," said he. "But I got to stay with you till you're off the concrete."

"Off the what?"

"Concrete," he answered patiently. "It means whiskey, of course."

I began to feel like something out of *Alice in Wonderland*, and decided not to ask any more questions.

Once in my room I got into bed immediately, while the jag-boss unpacked my bags and put everything in order. He went through my stuff very carefully, looking for liquor or other contraband. A patient at Keeley's is not permitted to have any drugs or medicines except those supplied by the Keeley physicians, and even simple laxatives, antisepsics, hair-tonics and the like are subject to confiscation. Firearms and other deadly weapons are also forbidden, and I was amused to see the jag-boss shaking his head doubtfully over a little penknife attached to my watch-chain.

By way of distracting my attention he told me of another patient, who carried a very large English kitbag. "But when I opened it up," said the jag-boss, "there was nothin' in it but two big pistols and an old purple necktie!" I laughed politely at this anecdote, and tried to think of something else. Shortly afterward I fell asleep, and rested very well indeed. Perhaps there was a soporific in those big black pills. I wouldn't know about that.

The next morning I was feeling very low, and the jag-boss led me over to the "Amen Corner" for a drink of concrete—which proved to be a mixture of whiskey and hot malted milk. Concrete is not nauseating as one would expect, but it certainly has a vile taste.

After the first sip I suggested that a spot of Scotch would be more to my liking, but the big Irishman who served the stuff just grinned and shook his head.

"It can't be done," said he. "Th' malted milk's par-r-t o' th' treatment."

"Good God, Mike!" gasped another newcomer who sat beside me on the concrete bench, "you're the worst bartender I ever met, and I've known thousands of 'em!"

Far from being deprived of whiskey, I was actually urged to take a drink of concrete now and then.

"We always give 'em 10 or 12 drinks a day, for the first two or three days, whether they want it or not," an attendant told me. "It keeps 'em from gettin' jittery."

The jag-boss followed me about the place all day, and stayed in my bedroom as night—never left me alone for a minute. I couldn't sleep the second night, so they gave me a dose of veronol. I wasn't able to eat much, either, but they didn't think it necessary to do anything about that.

The attendant assigned to me was a Russian, a very pleasant fellow, but some of the others weren't so satisfactory. The man in the next room complained loudly that his jag-boss was definitely feeble-minded. "He's so God damn' dumb," cried the patient, "that he couldn't carry guts to a bear!" The jag-boss in question preserved a stolid silence, but another attendant came to his rescue. "Well, sir," said he, "you can't expect no Einstein for 20 cents an hour."

The medicine upon which the Keeley treatment depends is known as the "secret remedy," and is administered hypodermically. Four times a day the jag-boss led me over to the "shooting gallery" contiguous to the billiard-room, where I rolled up my sleeve and stood in line with a hundred other booze-fighters. The Keeley physicians are singularly adept at this hypodermic business. One of them in particular is painless and very fast; it was not unusual for this man to give 100 injections in less than 25 minutes. The men in line always sighed with relief when this fellow prepared to do his stuff, and groaned when a less adroit physician appeared in his place. The doctor puts a new needle on the syringe for each patient, and draws the clear pinkish remedy from a porcelain bowl on the desk in front of him. A clerk stands beside the doctor, and checks off each man's name as he gets his shot. If a patient doesn't show up they send a jag-boss after him; if he is unable to walk, a doctor goes to the fellow's room, and gives him the remedy there.

In the early days of the Institute, Dr. Keeley called his treatment the "Gold Cure," and the secret remedy was widely advertised as a preparation of the "Double Chloride of Gold, the most powerful Sedative Tonic and Nerve Vitalizer in existence." The present directors seldom use the word "cure" in their advertising, and one seldom hears of "gold salts" or "colloidal gold" nowadays. It is said that nobody at Dwight has any official knowledge of the secret formula except Mr. H.B. Oughton, one of the owners, who mixes the stuff in the Keeley laboratory with his own hands.

"I certainly don't know what the ingredients are," one of the staff doctors told me, "but I think I could make a pretty good guess. You may rest assured there is no gold in it," he added with a grin.

The only other medicine used in the Keeley routine is a bitter yellow tonic. The patient keeps a bottle of this stuff in his room, and takes a spoonful in water every two hours. The mixture of tonic and water smells like a livery stable, and is called "soup." The Keeley literature describes it as "a laxative tonic . . . which eliminates the poisons produced by alcohol." The formula of the tonic has never been published, so far as I know, but there is no particular effort to keep it secret. I showed samples to pharmacists in a distant city, without telling them where I had obtained it. They smelled and tasted the stuff, and said that it was a simple mixture containing gentian and potassium iodide, such as might be prescribed by any family physician.

My third day at Keeley's was one of the most depressing days I ever spent, anywhere. I suffered no localized physical pain, but was crushed beneath a vast melancholy and fatigue. I realized that the whiskey was being gradually withdrawn, but was too tired to voice any protest. I felt no particular craving for liquor, no desire for anything save rest. Someone offered me a drink of concrete, late in the afternoon, and I heard myself say, "No, thank you." The hell of it was that I could not really relax at all, and got only about four hours of sleep that night. The fourth day found me definitely improved, and I took two or three drinks of concrete, but without any noticeable reaction. I got through the night somehow, and on the morning of the fifth day found myself in fairly good condition, albeit a little shaky. "You're off the concrete now," said my

jag-boss, "And you won't need me any more." With that he hurried away to take charge of another patient who had just arrived, and I was left to shift for myself.

From that time forward my days were pretty much alike. When a gong rang at 7 A.M., I got out of bed and took a dose of soup. [Then I dressed, and had breakfast about 7:30. At 8 sharp we all lined up in the shooting-gallery for a shot of the secret remedy. At 9 I downed another jigger of soup, to be repeated at 11. Twelve o'clock found us in line for the second shot, followed by lunch at 12:30. The monotony of the afternoon was broken by soup at 1, 3 and 5. Immediately after the 5 o'clock soup came the third slug of remedy, followed by dinner at 5:30. Another dose of soup at 7, the fourth shot of remedy at 7:30, a final snifter of soup at 9, and the Keeley day was over. Everybody was supposed to be in bed with all lights out by 10:30, otherwise a loud-mouthed nightwatchman came thumping on doors, threatening to tell Mike O'Halloran about it. The Keeley routine may be reduced to the following formula: "Up at 7; shots at 8, 12, 5 and 7:30; tonic every two hours from 7 to 9; meals at 7:30, 12:30 and 5:30; bed at 10:30. You get some idea of the average patient's mental condition when I tell you that most of my fellow-students required a week or more to learn this simple schedule. The more rational among them wrote the whole thing down on cards, which they carried in their pockets. Others had constantly to be reminded by doctors and attendants. Some poor fellows gave up all effort to memorize the program, and simply followed the crowd the best they could.

The treatment is so arranged as to keep the patients occupied most of the day, but in the intervals between shots and soup a man can do pretty much as he likes. Every able-bodied inmate is supposed to take some light exercise in the Keeley gymnasium, but I did not care for this, and usually walked in the park instead. We were free to play billiards or bridge in the clubhouse or golf at a private course nearby. We could stroll down into the village, or visit our friends' apartments, or attend the local movies as often as we pleased. In order to avoid missing the afternoon and evening tonic, we carried phials containing measured doses of soup in our pockets. It was quite a spectacle to see 50 or 60 men, sitting quietly in the theater, suddenly lift the little bottles to their lips at exactly 3 o'clock. The townspeople paid no attention, of course, but strangers were astonished at the sight.

The food served at the Keeley Lodge is very good indeed, and we were urged to eat plenty of it. No carbonated drinks are permitted, and there is only one cup of coffee or tea per day for each patient, but otherwise everything is quite satisfactory. Early rising, regular meals and light exercise made everybody sleepy in the afternoon, but the jag-bosses wouldn't let us go to bed in the daytime. It was because of this regulation, I suppose, that we all slept so soundly at night.

Patients are not allowed to smoke cigarettes, but a moderate use of cigars or pipes is tolerated. The Keeley physicians contend that any tobacco makes people nervous, but mild tobacco is much worse than strong tobacco, because it is more deeply inhaled and therefore is absorbed by a larger area of mucous membrane. Cigarettes may not damage a normal man, but they are very bad for a chap who is nervous, particularly if he has a weakness for alcohol. "When you get out of this place," one of the doctors told me, "lay off cigarettes. A reformed drunkard who smokes cigarettes is almost sure, sooner or later, to lose his cure and return to liquor."

Thousands of retired booze-fighters have chuckled over one of the old Keeley songs:

We don't use tobacco because we think  
That those who do are liable to drink,  
So here's to dear old Dwight, drink her down,  
So here's to dear old Dwight, drink her down!

There are many other stanzas, and some of them are amusing and instructive, but it would never do to print them in this family publication.

During my first week at Keeley's an elderly judge appeared in the line-up. He was a "basket case," that is, he was carried into the Institute on a stretcher. An inveterate cigarette-smoker, he could not learn to smoke a pipe—said the damn' thing burned his mouth. And cigars made him sick. One day a jag-boss spotted the old gentleman shooting snipes in front of Elmer Seabert's clothing store. He persisted in this habit until finally some joker told him that nearly everybody in Dwight had syphilis, and that there was great danger of his being infected wih this disease. The judge was horrified, and suddenly threw away a whole handful of cigarette-butts he had hoarded in a secret pocket!

After eight days of treatment I began to feel pretty well, and was summoned to the office for an examination. The doctor said that my blood-pressure had dropped from 150/107 to 135/86, and that I had gained six pounds. He wanted to know if I wasn't eating more and sleeping better than before I came to Dwight, also if my "mind and memory" had not improved during the past week? I answered these questions in the affirmative, and signed a statement acknowledging that I was quite satisfied with the results of the treatment.

It was about this time that I expressed a desire to drive my car again, only to discover that the Keeley officials had confiscated the keys. A patient is not permitted to employ a chauffeur, or even to ride in a taxi without special arrangement with the manager. The theory is, I suppose, that patients need exercise and it is better for them to walk. A man's wife may dine with him in the Lodge, and even spend the night with him occasionally, but she is not allowed to take him for a ride in the family bus. I complained bitterly, but the manager said there'd be no patients driving cars while he was running the Institute, and there didn't seem to be anything I could do about it.

The rules and regulations for our guidance were posted in the billiard-room, and there was always a lot of wise-cracking about Rule VIII, which reads as follows: Patients must bear in mind that they are here for a cure and not for pleasure, and must act accordingly. Men and women patients are not allowed to associate with each other, nor must they make the acquaintance of the opposite sex. Failure to comply with this rule will result in dismissal.

Since the women patients live in a separate building off the campus, and are so segregated that few of us ever even saw one, the rule against our associating with them seems rather pointless. As for the village damsels, they looked upon us "Keeley-jags" with a jaundiced eye. A man who is denied the use of his car, who must hurry home at intervals for medical treatment, and who cannot stay out later than 10 o'clock at night, is not likely to be very popular with the ladies, even in a town like Dwight. The only women I met during my residence were the wives of my fellow booze-fighters, who frequently lunched in the Lodge dining-room. Having talked with these ladies, I suspect that Rule VIII was designed, not for the protection of the patients, but rather for the reassurance of

their wives and mistresses. Drunkards' women are notoriously jealous, for good and sufficient reasons. Many men are brought to the Institute by their female relatives, and the Keeley officials are very careful not to offend these people.

### III.

There is no library at the Keeley Institute, and patients seldom read anything heavier than the Chicago *Herald-Examiner*. Any attempt to read up on the history of the institution is definitely discouraged. There are several dark chapters in that history, and perhaps it is best to keep the patient away from the subject. The chief physician admitted to me that the Institute had at one time fallen into the hands of charlatans, but refused to discuss the matter in any detail. The townsfolk whisper all sorts of tales about underworld hookups, and allege that many well-known gangsters have been patients at the Institute. The murder of Dr. J.H. Oughton in the Keeley office, and the mysterious shooting of John R. Oughton, Jr., in a room over a Dwight restaurant, still furnish food for the village gossips. A gentleman in Chicago offered to give me "the inside dope on the Keeley racket," but he was prejudiced to the point of frothing at the mouth, and I doubt the authenticity of the documents that he showed me.

Many important facts about the early history of the Keeley Institute have been forgotten or suppressed, but it is now admitted that Leslie E. Keeley was born at Potsdam, N.Y., in 1832. As a boy he persisted in hanging around bars and taverns, and it was freely predicted that he would fill a drunkard's grave. He struggled through the local schools, and finally became a sophomore at Rush Medical College, in Chicago. When the Civil War broke out young Keeley joined the Federal army, and served as a medical officer at Jefferson Barracks, in St. Louis. He returned to the Rush Medical College in 1865, and was granted the M.D. degree in 1866.

Young Dr. Keeley came to Dwight as a "company surgeon" with the Chicago & Alton railroad. He built up a lucrative local practice, besides attending to the railroad employes, and continued to spend his leisure hours in barrooms and boozing-kens. Dr. Keeley was not highly regarded by the sober and respectable citizens of Dwight.

Most respectable people, in the early 70's, looked upon drunkenness as a vice or crime, to be punished by fines and imprisonment. Keeley astonished everybody by announcing his discovery that drunkenness is not a vice but a disease, adding that he had invented a medicine to cure it. The formula he kept secret, but intimated that it was based upon "the double chloride of sodium and gold," described as a powerful and dangerous drug. Keeley sent his remedy to various physicians who used it with business and professional men, for all the world like a bunch of Rotarians from Middletown.

Bob Ripley once broadcast the news that one Keeley patient out of eight is a farmer, one out of nine a salesman, one out of eleven a merchant, one out of 40 a physician, and one out of 782 a bartender, believe it or not! Personally, I don't believe it. Ripley doubtless depended upon the official Keeley figures, but I know that these are not always reliable. Many patients don't use their own names at Dwight, and when a man changes his name he often changes his occupation too. Ministers and college professors, for obvious reasons, nearly always lie about these matters when they matriculate at the Keeley Institute. Many of them pretend to be farmers or salesmen.

One popular guest at Dwight was an actor whom I know very well,

but he had registered under an alias, and posed as a cattleman. An elderly cartoonist, whose face is familiar to people all over the country, said that he was a tailor. Another fellow used the name of a well-known journalist, but I soon perceived that he was not a writer at all. A tall man with a southern accent claimed to be a professional lion-tamer, but everybody knew that he was only a politician.

A stately lady from Washington, the wife of another patient, stood goggle-eyed and aghast when she encountered this man on the verandah.

"Why, Senator!" she shrilled. "What on earth are you doing here?"

The lion-tamer bowed and smiled thinly.

"Ma'am," he drawled, "I'm a drunkard."

"Yes," said the stately lady's husband, "and that was a damned silly question, my dear."

The Keeley officials keep a record of names, addresses and such other information as is given by the patient, but they do not pry into his personal affairs. They don't answer any questions, either, and will not even admit that a man has been at the Institute without his written permission to do so. Nobody can telephone a patient unless the patient wishes to be called. No visitor can locate him, if he does not care to be located. Reporters and professional photographers are not admitted to the Keeley campus, and even candid-camera enthusiasts among the patients are discouraged as much as possible. Letters to patients are forwarded from an exchange office in Chicago, if the patient so desires. Outgoing mail is handled by a railway mail-clerk, so that the letters bear no telltale Dwight postmark.

One of my classmates used to lie for hours under a big sunlamp in the gymnasium, reading stacks of mail sent on from Honolulu. "I'm supposed to be spending my vacation in the Islands," he laughed, "so I've got to get a good tan before I go back to Chicago." Another cautious friend of mine was a physician, who told his wife that he was taking a post-graduate course at the Mayo clinic. This man did not trust the Keeley officials with his real name and address, but arranged to have every letter forwarded in a new envelope from a Rochester hotel.

Private detectives and insurance investigators come snooping around the Institute sometimes, but they don't get much information from the Keely office. Most life-insurance companies are reluctant to insure men who have been Keeley patients. When a Keeley graduate applies for insurance, it is best to send in an examination-blank with the name "John Doe," and ask if such an applicant will be accepted. If the answer is "yes," then mail a duplicate bearing your own name. By this procedure one can avoid getting his name on the insurance blacklist. Do not lie to an insurance company about having been at Keeley's, even though you took the treatment under an alias. If you succeed in getting a policy it is obtained by fraud; the insurance dicks generally find out sooner or later, and the policy will be cancelled. A man who already has a health-insurance policy, when he comes to Dwight, should demand payment just as if he were spending four weeks in an ordinary hospital. The Keeley officials sometimes advise people not to do this, saying that the Institute is not a hospital and that a Keeley patient cannot collect on these policies. I happen to know, however, that many such claims have been paid.

One day a station-wagon stopped in the drive, and a woman shoved a harassed-looking little man into the Lodge. She wanted her husband to take the Keeley treatment, but demanded a written guarantee that he would be cured.

"We don't guarantee anything," she was told. No reputable physician promises to cure his patients. We do our best, and that's all there is to it."

The woman marched down the steps without another word, the drunken husband stumbling after her as best he could.

This reminded a jag-boss of the fabulously rich Englishman who came to Dwight several years ago. This man traveled in considerable state, with two servants in a big foreign car. He rented a cottage near the campus, and sent for the Keeley doctors to give him the treatment at home, adding that they might charge whatever they liked. The Keeley people replied that they had only one treatment and one price, and that if he wanted the Cure he'd have to come over and stand in line with the rest of the boys. The Englishman left in a rage, and died of acute alcoholism a few months later.

Nearly every intelligent drunkard would like to drink moderately, but I have never met one who really wanted to be a total abstainer. I shall never forget a big fur-coated chap who walked into the Keeley office and called for the physician in charge.

"I've been drinkin' two quarts of gin every day," said he. "I want to take the Cure, an' cut it down to about a pint."

The doctor grinned and shook his head.

"That's what they all want," he said, "but it can't be done. We can't turn a drunkard into a moderate drinker. We can help you to quit drinking altogether."

"No thanks, Doc," the fellow answered cheerfully, "I'd rather go on as I am, than to be a God damn' teetotaler."

The doctor sighed as we watched the big man get into a taxi.

"If I could teach a booze-fighter how to drink like a gentleman, I wouldn't stay at Keeley's 10 minutes," said he. "I'd start a sanitarium of my own, and make a million dollars a year."

It always amused me to hear the booze-fighters in the Lodge denouncing people who don't drink. One man remarked that he hoped his daughter would marry a moderate drinker, rather than a total abstainer. "The typical teetotaler," said he, "is either a fanatic or a reformed drunkard. In either case, his nervous system is congenitally unstable. These fellows are intelligent, but temperamental. They're all weaklings, and weaklings don't make women happy. I never employ teetotalers in my factory, and I certainly don't want one of 'em for a son-in-law."

An elderly physician nodded his head in solemn agreement. "Teetotalers are bad enough," he growled, "but prohibitionists are a thousand times worse. The comic papers represent the prohibitionist as a thin, ascetic-looking man in a stovepipe hat, but it isn't so in real life. Most of 'em are fat, pasty-faced, middle-aged women. They eat like swine, and tell dirty stories, and take sleeping-powders. They seem particularly subject to disorders of the kidneys and bladder, and to venereal disease. There is something about these taboo-cults that attracts fat, unwholesome, sex-mad women. I have never met a militant prohibitionist whom I should care to entertain in my home, or introduce to my family."

"You're right, Doc," said a little man with a twinkle, "they ain't the kind of people a man would want to get drunk with!"

I was unable to find anybody at Dwight, either patient or physician, who would say a good word for prohibition. "The 18th Amendment was a fine thing for the Keeley Institute," a local business man told me, "but it was mighty bad for the general public." Dr. Keeley himself denounced prohibitionists as "the most short-sighted people on earth." Keeley never advocated total abstinence for the general public. "Alcohol is a medicine," he wrote. "It anesthetizes sorrow, it stimulates joy, it kills microbes, it destroys ptomaines. If alcohol nerves the arm of a murderer, it also nerves the heart of a fever patient. If alcohol is the genius of the gambling den, it is also the emblem of the blood in the commemoration of the Lord's Supper."

## CONFessions OF A BOOZE-FIGHTER

Even before his own theory of inebriety was formulated, Keeley realized that whiskey is no more the cause of alcoholism than sugar is the cause of diabetes. Most everybody drinks liquor and eats sugar, but only a few of us are booze-fighters and diabetics. "Probably not more than one drinker in 25 ever becomes a drunkard," Dr. Keeley wrote. "The other two dozen may keep wine-cellars and sideboards, carry bottles in their pockets, drink socially, take alcohol as a medicine, and drink wherever they please, but they do not become drunkards." The physicians who run the Institute now are even more optimistic about this; they estimate that only one drinker out of 50 has the peculiar nervous instability that leads to chronic alcoholism.

Somebody in the Lodge told the story of a preacher who tried to convert a beer-drinker to prohibition.

"I admit that drinking doesn't do you any harm, Mr. Weiss," argued the preacher. "But think of all the people who are utterly ruined by liquor—wives beaten, children hungry, homes broken up! Wouldn't you be willing to go without your beer, in order to prevent all this misery?"

"Well," said Mr. Weiss thoughtfully, "do you admit that preachers sometimes commit adultery, and even rape?"

"No doubt there have been such cases," the minister replied, "but they are certainly very rare."

"Well," said the beer-drinker, "do you think we should castrate all preachers, just to prevent a few of them from committing these terrible crimes?"

A drunkard's relatives sometimes bring him to Keeley's against his will, or at least without his consent, under some pretense or other. Usually they just tell him they're going to a big party somewhere, and ply him with liquor along the road. He generally passes out before they get to Dwight, and the attendants carry him in on a stretcher. No wonder the poor fellow is outraged when he wakes up, to find himself in the Institute! One of these shanghaied booze-fighters came into my room, and asked if he might use my typewriter. "I want to write a letter to my friends," said he, "my dear kind friends who brought me to this delightful place." After tapping away for a while he suddenly turned to me with the question: "How do you spell bastard?"

There may be cases in which these high-handed measures are justified, but they should be avoided wherever possible. If the family doctor can't persuade a man to take the treatment, it may be best to let him go on some success, and in 1879 he gave up his other work and opened the first Keeley Institute at Dwight.

The thing was a great success, almost from the beginning. Drunkards came to Dwight from all parts of the United States and Canada, and from several European countries. Keeley had very little money, but he soon interested capitalists who took over the business management of the Institute. Substantial brick buildings were erected in Dwight, and it was not unusual for the Keeley physicians to have 700 or 800 patients in residence at one time.

In 1892 Keeley went to Europe, and founded a branch Institute in London. Returning to Dwight, he began to train graduate physicians in the Keeley technic, and they established Institutes in every one of the United States, besides several in Canada and in Australia.

Many conservative physicians denounced Keeley as a quack, because he kept his method a secret. A famous minister of the gospel shouted from his pulpit that the Gold Cure was a fake, with no gold in it except that which jingled in Dr. Keeley's pockets. Keeley once said in a public address: "I have been greatly censured for not making my cure, or my formulae,

## CONFessions OF A BOOZE-FIGHTER

public . . . I have no formulae to publish . . . My remedies are drugs which are used by the profession everywhere in the treatment of diseases . . . My cure is the result of a system, and cannot be accomplished by the simple administration of a sovereign remedy . . . It is as impossible to publish formulae that the public can use for the cure of disease as it would be to publish directions for the surgical extirpation of cancers for the use of the public."

Dr. Keeley was always in bad repute with the medical societies, but many other organizations recognized his merits, and St. Louis University gave him an honorary LL.D. At least four States passed laws recognizing the Keeley Cure and providing state aid for those unable to afford the treatment. Thousands of indigent booze-fighters were sent to the various Institutes by order of county judges, at county and state expense. The United States government administered the Keeley treatment in Soldiers' Homes and Veterans' Hospitals. The head of the Soldiers' Home in Milwaukee reported that "despite the fact that more than 40 hell-holes for the trapping of old soldiers exist within a mile of the Home, I have permanently cured more than 400 veterans, one of whom had practically been drunk ever since the Mexican War!"

Keeley got a great deal of valuable publicity through Joseph Medill, editor and principal owner of *The Chicago Tribune*. "In testing the Keeley Cure," wrote Medill in a signed editorial, "I selected half a dozen of the toughest products of alcoholism which Chicago saloons had been able to turn out. The experimental cases all returned to me looking as if a veritable miracle had been wrought. The change for the better was so great that I scarcely recognized them. They went away sots, and returned gentlemen. This converted me to the belief in the efficacy of Dr. Keeley's treatment for alcoholism." Once convinced, Medill whooped it up for Keeley at every opportunity, and it became the custom for many corporations to send their bibulous employes to Dwight at the company's expense.

Here are some enthusiastic testimonials, signed by other big shots of the gay nineties:

I have sent about 200 of my employes, and all have been permanently cured. I do not think there is any one thing or any one man who ever did the good to humanity that Keeley is doing with his cure.

P. D. Armour, founder of the Armour Packing Company.

The Keeley Cure has saved where nothing else under Heaven would . . . It has on it the mark of the approval of the Lord God Almighty.

Rev. T. DeWitt Talmadge, famous clergymann.

To my mind the greatest discovery of this century is the Keeley Cure for inebriety, because its results are more far-reaching than all other discoveries which have been made.

John P. Altgeld, Governor of Illinois.

The Keeley Cure has strongly reinforced the cause of moral suasion for the man who drinks. I had known the Keeley Cure long before it was generally known to the world, and had recommended it, and have taken occasion often to endorse it.

Frances E. Willard, late president W.C.T.U.

The Keeley League, organized in 1890 by the loafers in a Dwight

blacksmith shop, was at first merely a social club for the entertainment of patients at the Institute. A few years later it developed into a sort of Keeley Alumni Association, with 359 local chapters, and more than 30,000 active members. These fellows wore badges, communicated by secret signs and grips, held national conventions every year, and had a hell of a time generally. It was, one of the members told me, the only organization in the world composed exclusively of reformed drunkards. This distinction was lost in the Woman's Auxiliary League, however, which gradually captured the organization. A few members of the Auxiliary had actually taken the Cure, but most of them were merely female relatives of Keeley graduates.

"The Keeley League of America," according to a booklet entitled *The Perfect Keeley Cure*, published in 1896, "embraces among its members eminent lawyers, preachers, doctors, United States senators and congressmen, and thousands of prominent, broad-minded business men . . . Wear the Keeley emblem! Adorn your coat lapel with the neat badge of your redeemed manhood! The world will honor you for wearing it, and it will be a shield to save you from the Enemy. No man will invite you a second time to partake of the poison which once ruined you, if you but point him to that little band of gold with its significant monogram!"

The following is copied from Art. 1, Sec. 2 of the Keeley League's constitution: The objects of this League are to further the cause of temperance among all people by curing the drunkard of the disease of intemperance, and preventing the youth of the country, by education and example, from contracting it; to bind together in a fraternal bond all who have taken the Keeley Treatment for Inebriety; to extend the knowledge of the Keeley Remedies; to establish auxiliary Leagues, and by medical, moral, and Christian methods, with the help of Almighty God, to discourage and annihilate the use of liquor as a beverage, in any way which may seem opportune or occasion may demand.

As a part of this program, the League and the Auxiliary combined to sponsor a periodical called *The Banner of Gold*. This magazine was advertised as "a 16-page illustrated literary, family and practical temperance journal, published on the first day of each month for the subscription price of 50 cents per annum . . . A corps of contributors in prose, verse and scientific temperance review helps to make *The Banner of Gold* sparkle with gems of literary excellence."

Much of the space in *The Banner of Gold* was devoted to mere testimonials, somewhat in the manner of the patient-medicine almanacs, but the "gems of literary excellence" were not altogether lacking. Here is a specimen contributed by Walt Mason, a distinguished alumnus once widely known as a newspaper poet:

Who will dare to tell a sailor, dying on a broken spar  
That he must not look to heaven, feast his eyes upon a star?  
Who will dare to tell a pilgrim, thirsting on a desert plain  
That it's wrong to wish for water, wrong to kneel and pray for rain?

He who dares may come and tell us, tell us that we are disgraced,  
But his telling will not hurt us while our confidence is placed  
In the God who gently led us from the old life, vile, impure,  
To the grandeur and the glory of the Keeley Whiskey Cure!

The following lines are from a poem entitled "General Grant and

Doctor Keeley," by Charles Eugene Banks.

Yes, we've laid the warworn symbols,  
Knapsack, sword and gun away,  
There is neither pride nor hatred  
Where they sleep, the Blue and Gray.

But the Keeley Button proudly  
We have clasped in our lapel,  
Symbol of the God that's in us,  
Heaven triumphant over Hell.

Once again the veterans gather  
Doing battle for the right,  
Yet it is not Grant who leads us.  
But the Grand Old Man of Dwight!

Keeley himself was all in favor of this sensational publicity at first, but as time went on he began to lose interest in the whole thing. Always inclined to be unorthodox and eclectic in his medical opinions, Dr. Keeley was early attracted by the doctrines of homeopathy. Later on his wife converted him to Christian Science. At one time he seriously considered discontinuing the use of medicines in the Keeley treatment, and introducing Christian Science methods instead.

Dr. Keeley died in Los Angeles, February 21, 1900, at the age of 68, with only a Christian Science "healer" in attendance. He had suffered from a severe cold for several days, but the cause of death was officially reported as heart disease. Most of the Keeley estate, valued at over \$1,000,000, went to Dr. Keeley's widow who lived in Dwight. Mrs. Keeley did not approve of the Keeley treatment, so she sold the Institute soon after Dr. Keeley's death, but the business continued to flourish.

In 1903 the Institute moved to a much larger building, opened with great ceremony by President Theodore Roosevelt, who threw the switch that turned on the lights and set the machinery in motion. The Keeley business prospered during the Prohibition era, but Repeal and the Depression have combined against it in recent years. At one time there were more than 50 branch Institutes, now there are only five. Formerly there were often 600 or 700 patients at Dwight, now there are usually less than 100. The building dedicated by President Roosevelt is much too large for the Keeley Institute of today, and has been turned over to the United States government for use as a Veterans' Hospital.

#### IV.

After 10 days of treatment I felt pretty much at home, and took my rightful place among the old-timers who sat around the big fireplace in the Lodge. Two or three of these veterans were obviously boozers—fat, red-nosed, pompous and jittery. But most of them were just ordinary drinking for a while. A man brought to Keeley's against his will is much less likely to be cured than one who comes of his own accord. Most of the patients who are expelled, or who leave the Institute before graduation, are men who have been dragged in by well-meaning kidnappers.

They still tell the story of a Chicago broker who brought his drunken

nephew down to take the Keeley Cure. They did a lot of drinking on the way, and the older man—unaccustomed to strong drink—was quite out of his head when they arrived at Dwight. So the drunkard solemnly enrolled the broken in the Institute, and drove away in his uncle's car!

There is no forcible restraint at Keeley's, and patients are free to leave at any time. Occasionally one does decide to "quit school" immediately after his enrollment, but the doctors usually talk him out of it. They argue that his tuition has already been paid, that the money will not be refunded, and that he might as well get the treatment to which he is entitled. They remind him that his relatives expect him to stay, and that he has signed an agreement to obey the rules of the Institute. If the patient still insists on going, the doctors say that they are in duty bound to wire his people, and won't he please stay on as a guest for a few hours longer, just to make sure that his wife has been properly notified! If they can kid the patient along for two or three days, he begins to feel better, and usually decides to take the rest of the treatment.

I remember one old fellow, a retired banker, who did not show up one evening for his 5 o'clock shot. He wasn't in his room, and some of his friends went out to look for him. They finally located him in the nearby tavern, drunk as a piper. He came back to the Lodge after a while, and they put him to bed. Next morning he told me how it happened. "I don't intend to quit drinking at all," said he. "I just came here to please my children. I'm nearly 70, and I've been sick for 10 years. I think I'll live just as long drunk as I would sober, and I don't give a damn, anyway." The Keeley people phoned his relatives, who came and took him away a few days later. Several other patients were expelled during my stay at Dwight. After a man gets off the concrete and dismisses his jag-boss, the doctors don't argue with him any longer. If he doesn't obey the rules they simply chuck him out, and that's all there is to it.

One thing which rather upset me, at first, was the discovery that many of the patients at Keeley's had taken the treatment before. One old chap told me that he had been "cured" five times. "It's just like the permanent waves the gals get nowadays," he said cheerfully, "they ain't so permanent as they look." This man was the only five-time-loser I ever met, but there were several who had been cured three times, and many who were taking the treatment for the second time. I contacted as many of these two-timers as possible, and tried to find out just what had caused their relapse.

In probably 90 percent of the cases I investigated, the patient had "lost his cure" through social drinking. After a man has been on the wagon for a year or two he imagines that his weakness for alcohol has been conquered, and that an occasional drink won't do him any harm.

"I didn't touch a drop for 19 months," one man told me, "and then somebody put a little brandy in my coffee, on Christmas Eve. It didn't seem to hurt me any, so on December 28th I drank two small glasses of light wine, and on New Years Day I took one highball. A week later I started on a real old-fashioned drunk, and about the middle of February my friends brought me back to Keeley's."

"When a man gets out of the Keeley Cure he can refuse a drink," said another veteran. "But if he takes one drink, he loses the power to refuse another. As long as you don't touch a drop you'll get along all right, but as soon as you take one drink you're gone."

It is difficult for a normal moderate drinker to believe that one small glass of beer, containing less than 5 percent of alcohol, can transform a Keeley graduate into a sodden drunkard in a few hours time. But that's the way it works, as many a backsliding alumnus can testify. Dr. Robert E. Maupin told me of a chap who abstained for 28 years, then fell off the wagon when his own son persuaded him to split a bottle of beer. From

that day forward he began to drink again, and three months later he returned to Dwight for further treatment.

Some years ago I read a book entitled "Asylum," by William Seabrook. It was the autobiography of an intrepid booze-fighter, who spent several months in a sanitarium. The story ended with the statement that the author had been cured of alcoholism, and was now able to drink moderately. I have heard nothing of Mr. Seabrook since, but I fear that he did not long remain a moderate drinker. The chances are that Mr. Seabrook is, by this time, either a drunkard or a total abstainer.

There have been many cases in which men lost their cures through the inadvertent use of proprietary medicines, many of which contain alcohol. "One bottle of an ordinary patent bitters," wrote Dr. Keeley many years ago, "will cause the staunchest veteran among the curbed inebriates to lapse . . . A cured inebriate cannot drink alcohol without causing a return of his disease." The Keeley physicians long ago pointed out that the reformed drunkard must avoid mouth-washes, hair tonics and shaving lotions which contain alcohol. Dr. Keeley himself advised cured inebriates against applying alcohol to wounds, or even to the unbroken skin, since "alcohol baths, rubs or lotions may cause intoxication by absorption."

Even the small amount of alcohol contained in sacramental wine, as used in religious ceremonies, has frequently caused reformed boozefighters to fall off the wagon, according to Dr. Charles L. Hamilton, author of a booklet entitled *Why Cured Inebriates Relapse*. Dr. Hamilton, formerly connected with the Keeley Institute, advised his students to avoid even the ordinary grape-juice served at soda fountains. "I do not wish," he wrote, "to be understood as saying that real unfermented grape juice contains any alcohol, but absolute safety in my opinion would indicate to the cured inebriate the danger of using grape juice which may be at least partially fermented."

Dr. Keeley, in the early days of the Institute, did not take the problem of repeaters very seriously. "Not more than 5 percent of the inebriates cured by my treatment lapse, as far as I can ascertain," he wrote in 1896. No statistics on this subject are easily available now, and it appears that the Keeley office is not interested in publishing such data. But from my own acquaintance with Keeley patients I am sure that the proportion of two-timers is much larger than Dr. Keeley's estimate. Several old grads have placed the figure as high as 40 percent. Personally, I think that the truth lies somewhere between 15 and 25.

Back in the 90's, the enemies of the Institute used to say that "Keeley is taking in drunkards, and turning out dope-fields." Some people still believe that the Keeley treatment involves the extensive use of morphine and codein. In other words, they think the cure consists in converting a booze-fighter into a mild sort of hophead, and then gradually withdrawing the drug. This theory might account for the fact that many men, accustomed to use whiskey as a soporific, sleep like harvest-hands during their stay at the Institute. It might also explain why the Keeley physicians are so insistent that all patients shall stay the full 28 days. If a man were taking narcotics, it would not do for him to leave until the withdrawal treatment was complete. However, the Keeley officials deny that the remedy contains any narcotic drug, and I believe them. One reason is that the stuff seems to be all alike—not a gradual weakening or withdrawal proposition. A man who has been at Keeley's only three days may stand in line beside another who has been there three weeks, and they both get the same kind of medicine, in apparently identical amounts, out of the same little porcelain dish. Another reason for believing that the Keeley remedy does not contain narcotics is that the patient is not conscious of any particular craving for the medicine, either during treatment or

after graduation. Many a Keeley alumnus loses his cure after a few months and takes up drinking again, but I have never known one to become a drug addict.

Another thing which should be mentioned is the opinion, still prevalent in some quarters, that the Keeley treatment sometimes causes sexual impotence. This notion has frightened a lot of men away from the Institute, and many wives have refused to allow their husbands to take the Cure on this account. The Institute at Hot Springs, Arkansas, found it advisable to issue the following notice: *The Keeley treatment for liquor does not leave any bad after effects. This statement will reassure those men and women who are under the impression that some of the functions of the body are impaired by the Keeley treatment.* I have heard patients at Dwight complain that the Keeley medicines are definitely anaphrodisiac. There was one elderly man who claimed that the treatment had rendered him impotent, and threatened to sue the Institute for damages. This man's wife remarked later that "the old fool lost his manhood years ago, but he was always so drunk that he never missed it, until they sobered him up at Dwight!" I do not believe that the Keeley treatment has ever made any man impotent, or decreased in any way his capacity for sexual enjoyment. Quite the contrary, in fact!

Remembering the large number of booze-fighters in my own family, I had always supposed that a tendency to alcoholism was hereditary. It was a great surprise, therefore, to find that so many Keeley patients came from families of total abstainers.

"None of my people ever drank a drop," said one of my fellow-students. "My father was a preacher. He told us children that liquor was a vile poison, used mostly by tramps and degenerate criminals. When I grew older I learned that most of the intelligent, educated, successful men in our town drank whiskey. I knew then that my father had deliberately lied to me, and I never paid much attention to anything he said after that."

Several of the assembled rum-pots nodded their heads at this, but nobody offered any comment. Finally the man who claimed to be a lion-tamer broke the silence.

"It's a strange thing," he said thoughtfully, "that so many of our parental teachings have to be discarded when we grow up. As a boy I was taught that men should be honest and women should be virtuous. I still feel vaguely that there must be something in this theory. And yet, the men whom I have most liked and respected were only indifferently honest. And the best women that I have known were not virtuous at all."

"What parents tell children doesn't seem to matter much," mused another veteran. "My mother made me sign the White Ribbon pledge before I was 10 years old, and I heard rabid prohibition talk all through my childhood. I marched in parades, too, and sang at temperance rallies. But here I am in the Keeley Cure, same as the rest of you drunks," and he grinned wryly.

"Well, suh," remarked a little man with a twinkle, "I was raised in the Blue Grass, and my folks brought me up to drink like a Southe'n gentleman, suh. And fo those teachin's"—he paused in a very delicate imitation of the lion-tamer's senatorial stance—"to those teachin's I attribute my present position, suh!"

A roar of laughter ended the discussion, and even the lion-tamer chuckled a bit as we all walked over toward the shooting-gallery.

## V.

Nobody knows what really causes alcoholism, but almost every physician who has studied the matter has a pet theory about it, and the scholarly booze-fighters in the Lodge used to discuss these theories at some length.

Dr. Keeley believed that excessive drinking was largely due to "decaying organic matter" which contaminated the air and drinking-water. "I regard good sanitation as the one great essential element of temperance," he wrote, "and I regard bad sanitation as the chief and great cause of intemperance." Men who knew Keeley personally have quoted him as saying that outdoor toilets were the sole cause of drunkenness, but he did not commit himself quite so baldly in print. He always insisted that the weakness for alcohol is not inherited, and once wrote a book entitled *The Non-Hereditiy of Inebriety*.

Most modern writers find the cause of drunkenness in the inherited nervous mechanism of the individual drunkard. As Dr. J.T. McCurdy said, "the alcoholic is, even before he touches a drop, an abnormal person." His abnormal nervous system causes him to become a drunkard, and he remains abnormal even though he is cured of his drunkenness. "The vast majority of all abnormal drinkers," writes Francis T. Chambers, "are neurotics—cousins to the hypochondriacs and nymphomaniacs who have taken out their grudge against life by a different sort of rebellion." Drunkenness is not a disease, but only a symptom. The Keeley physicians can help a man to get on the wagon, but they can't give him a new nervous system. That's why a reformed drunkard can never become a moderate drinker. The nervous abnormality which made him a drunkard is still there, and it will make him a drunkard again, unless he avoids alcohol entirely.

Since the writings of Freud and Adler have become known to the medical profession, many physicians explain drunkenness by psychological concepts, such as escape mechanisms and the inferiority complex. As Dr. A.J. McGee puts it, "the alcoholic is a hypersensitive individual who is extremely conscious of his own inadequacies. From experience he has found that alcohol makes it possible for him to overcome shyness, to dispel boredom, and to blunt his inhibitory impulses. It is a form of escape mechanism, providing a convenient and efficient cloak with which to cover an exaggerated sense of inferiority . . . No matter what the professed reason for indulgence may be, actual analyses of thousands of cases lead one to the inevitable conclusion that the majority of individuals meet life's difficulties by the use of strategy and skill, while the alcoholic seeks effortless escape in alcohol. All human beings need and crave rest and relaxation. To a small percentage, the stresses and strains of modern life present too great an obstacle to be hurdled by ordinary mental mechanisms, and the effortless relaxation secured by alcohol produces a substitute mental recuperation, which temporarily satisfies both the physiologic and the psychologic need."

Many psychoanalysts regard alcoholism as a symptom of grave sexual derangement, and some have even claimed that all drunkards are potential homosexuals. "Can it be merely chance," asks Dr. L. P. Clarke, "that men so much enjoy being among themselves and drinking together? The healthy man has a distaste for tenderness between man and man, but alcohol dissolves this repugnance. Men drink, fall on each others' necks, feel themselves united by an inner bond, and weep. In a word, their behavior is womanish. Every drinking bout has a touch of homosexuality."

Dr. Bert Trippeer, in his popular lectures at Dwight, puts forward a physiologic theory which may be summarized as follows: The drunkard is allergic to alcohol, just as another man may be allergic to quinine, or tomatoes, or to any one of many other substances. This idiosyncrasy for alcohol is due to an inherited weakness in the nervous system, a weakness which affects about two per cent of the total population. The fact that a man is allergic to alcohol doesn't mean that he is neurotic or psychopathic or abnormal in any other way. A man of this type may live a happy, wholesome, useful life, so long as he does not touch a drop of alcohol. But he can never hope to become a moderate drinker, since even the smallest amount of alcohol is poison to him.

It is not surprising that booze-fighters should be almost unanimous in denouncing Clarke, Chambers and others who associate alcoholism with definite mental aberrations. It does seem significant, however, that they are so bitterly opposed to all of the psychological theories. Some of them protest a little too loudly, I think. There is something pathetically comic about a pompous little man, who has already drunk himself into the Keeley Cure, shouting indignantly that he has not got an inferiority complex! Your typical neurotic doesn't mind being allergic to something-or-other, but he can't bear the thought that there's a screw loose in his psyche. Most of the men I knew at Dwight were happy to accept the allergy theory so plausibly presented by Dr. Trippeer.

## VI.

The morning I was to leave Dwight they called me over to the office for final examination. Dr. McGee pointed out that my pulse and blood-pressure were normal now, that I had gained eight pounds, and that my general physical condition was apparently much improved. I expressed myself as quite satisfied with the treatment, and signed a paper to that effect. One of the physicians handed me a final bottle of the Keeley tonic, remarking that this was on the house. I thanked him, and put the bottle in my pocket.

Back at the Lodge I was presented with a gaudily printed diploma, headed by an inscription in dubious Latin, sealed with the picture of a swan, and signed by 10 of my Brothers in the Bond. This document attests that I have been awarded a degree which shall be nameless here, described me as belonging to "a harmless but distinct species of maniac," and ends with the solemn warning: **Unless thou art one of the Faithful, thy Alma Mater shall welcome thee back, far sooner than thou thinkest.** There were also imparted to me certain signs and passwords, by means of which the sons of Keeley may recognize each other, unknown to the barbarians who have never walked beside the Waters under the Windmill.

In some cases, when an especially popular Brother graduates, the entire student body escorts him to the railroad station. There is cheering and singing and speech-making and all manner of hilarious horse-play. The people on the Chicago trains seem utterly astounded—perhaps some of them think that it really is a college commencement. Sometimes the victim's luggage is covered with improvised stickers, and a big Keeley pennant is hung about his neck. No such demonstration marked my exodus from Dwight, however. I just shook hands with a few of my particular friends, then got into my car and drove away.

That was more than five years ago, and I'm still on the wagon. Not a drop of any liquid containing alcohol has passed my lips for 1,849 days.

I am in good health, I work pretty hard, I have made some progress in my profession, I have been singularly fortunate in many ways. A few of my friends still congratulate me on my reformation, but most of them seem to have forgotten that I ever drank to excess. My fraternity brothers from Dwight regard my cure as an unqualified success.

Many reformed drunkards say that they never think about whiskey, but that is not true in my case. The Keeley treatment has made it possible for me to live without alcohol, but it has not miraculously taken away my appetite for liquor. There are times when I want a drink very much indeed, and I still dream about Haig & Haig occasionally. When I wake up in the dark I still grope for the flask that used to lie under my pillow, and the desirability of an eye-opener is usually the first thing that comes to my mind in the morning. Some days are much worse than others, of course. When the desire for whiskey becomes too intense, I eat a bit of sweet chocolate, or drink a little malted milk. Nothing kills a thirst so quickly as a bellyfull of sweet stuff, and an ounce of sugar is worth a pound of will-power, any time. Some Keeley graduates continue to frequent bars and night-clubs, drinking fruit-juices or seltzer, but I find it best to keep away from such places. I can go into a taproom without taking a drink, of course. But what's the use? It is always easier to avoid temptation than to resist it.

The mere physical craving for alcohol is a minor matter, after all. Most physical appetites can be ignored or suppressed, if a sufficiently powerful motive be provided. Fat women go without food to improve their figures, monks do without sexual intercourse in order to save their souls. In the same way, an alcoholic can get along without liquor, if his life depends upon such abstinence. But fasting women and celibate priests are not particularly happy in their deprivations, and neither is the reformed booze-fighter.

"I haven't touch a drop for seven years," said one of my fellow alumni, just the other day. "I'm in perfect health, I am happily married, and I'm making plenty of money. Everything is just fine, except—except that the birds don't sing any more."

I have heard many variants of this tale. Even though the obvious physical desire for liquor has passed and been forgotten, the reformed drunkard still feels that something is missing from the pattern of his life. A man who has known the high spiritual joy of drunkenness can never be quite satisfied with the lesser, coarser pleasure of sobriety.

Most Keeley graduates, even those who have been "cured" several times, are firmly convinced that they will never take another drink. I have no such conviction. I do not believe that I have been really cured of anything. Nothing has happened to me except that I have quit drinking. I abstain from alcohol just as a diabetic abstains from sugar, and for the same reasons. There hasn't been any great moral victory—it's only a truce, or at best an armistice. I am not a conquering hero who has vanquished the Demon Rum. I'm just a booze-fighter on furlough.

Liquor is ruinous to my health and to my earning power, and I realize that I must stay on the wagon so long as these things are important to me. Probably five years, maybe 10, possibly longer. But if I live to be 65 I am resolved to quit work, and retire to an isolated place adapted to my needs. And there, with appropriate ceremonies, I shall

formally renounce this abstinence which has been forced upon me. I know that I shall never, even in my old age, be able to drink like a gentleman. But I intend to try it, anyway, and do the best I can. Hope springs eternal, and a man must have something to look forward to. Perhaps the birds will sing again, for a little while, before the final dark comes down.